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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL PELOSI APRIL 5 MEETING WITH MAJLIS AL-SHURA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael Gfoeller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and delegation met on April 5 with Majlis Al-Shura Chairman Sheikh Dr. Salih bin Humaid, several other Shura Council members, and Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel Al-Jubeir. During a lively exchange of information and ideas, Humaid explained that the Shura Council functions "like any other parliament" and that its two main functions are to monitor the government's performance and propose rules and regulations. He added that the Shura Council has issued over 90 laws and regulations. The discussions focused on the Arab Peace Initiative, with Shura Council representatives requesting the U.S. Congress to push Israel to accept the initiative. Council representatives stated that the USG has a key role in getting Israel to play a positive role in the Arab Peace Initiative and in making the region free of WMD. The Shura Council also suggested that the U.S. re-think legislation aimed at reducing U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Both sides expressed interest in expanding contacts between Congress and the Shura Council. END SUMMARY.

Atmospherics

¶2. (C) On April 5, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-California), Rep. Henry Waxman (D-California), Rep. Nick Rahall (D-West Virginia), Rep. Louise McIntosh Saughter (D-New York), Rep. Dave Hobson (R-Ohio), and Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minnesota) met with Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council) Chairman Sheikh Dr. Salih bin Humaid, Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel Al-Jubeir, and eleven other Shura Council members. Humaid, who is also the imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, initially greeted Speaker Pelosi by extending his hand -- although it is well known that he does not shake hands with women because of his religious beliefs. The Speaker placed her hand on her chest, and Humaid subsequently responded in kind. Humaid shook the hands of all the male members of the U.S. delegation, taking Congressman Lantos' hand in both of his.

¶3. (C) The Shura Council Chairman quickly led the delegation through the Council's ornate, state-of-the-art main chamber, which is equipped with fully computerized seats for members and wide screen video monitors on the walls. He then led the delegation into a smaller, but equally ornate, chamber where

the delegation mounted the dais and Speaker Pelosi sat in the Chairman's seat, exclaiming that she liked the view from that position. One Council member explained to the Speaker that the Chairman does not decide who will speak, rather it is whoever pushes a button first. During the tour, one Council member told Congressman Rahall that there are "tremendous fights" among Council members and that they "hardly agree with the government (SAG) on anything, especially if the SAG proposes taxes."

¶4. (C) Before entering the meeting room, the U.S. delegation was greeted by the 11 Council members who participated in the main meeting. At one point during the meeting, Speaker Pelosi noted that when Congressman Ellison took the oath of office in January 2007, he did so on a Qur'an originally owned by President Jefferson. She pointed out that she told King Abdullah that Jefferson studied Arabic after he left the White House and that U.S. interest in Islam is at least 200 years old. (COMMENT: The Majlis members were visibly and audibly impressed. END COMMENT.) Following the discussion, the Shura Council hosted the U.S. delegation and their spouses at a luncheon.

Saudi Representatives

¶5. (U) Shura Council representatives present at the meeting included: Chairman Sheikh Dr. Salih bin Humaid; Vice Chairman Mahmoud A. Taiba; KSA-USA Friendship Committee Chairman, former Economic and Energy Affairs Committee Chairman, and former Deputy Commerce Minister Dr. Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al-Zamil; former Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman and former Deputy Commander of the National Guard Dr. Bandar bin

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Mohammad Al-Aiban; former Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee Dr. Mohammad bin Ibrahim Al-Hilwa; member of the Economic and Energy Affairs Committee Majid A. Al-Moneef; member of the Educational and Scientific Research Affairs Committee Dr. Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Ghamdi; Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman and consultant to the KSA National Security Council Dr. Sadagh Y. Fadhel; member of the Economic and Energy Affairs Committee and former Secretary General of the Chamber of Commerce Usamah M. Al-Kurdi; member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Mohammed I. Bu-Hulaiga; and member of the Islamic Affairs and Human Rights Committee and of the Supreme Institute of Law Dr. Mohammad bin Omar Al-Idrissi.

Introduction to the Shura Council

¶6. (C) Humaid welcomed the delegation and said that he looks forward to more extensive visits in the future. He emphasized the importance of the delegation gaining a wider knowledge of the KSA and the importance of augmenting what is heard and read with a personal understanding of Saudi Arabia.

He praised the delegation's visit as an attempt to obtain various points of view in order to determine the "right solutions" to problems. He said the Shura Council is proud of the strong historic ties between Saudi Arabia and the U.S., which were unfortunately shaken and disturbed by the events of September 11, 2001. He pointed out that almost all of the Shura Council members in this meeting were educated in the U.S., many in California. He emphasized the importance of reestablishing efforts to improve U.S.-KSA relations, noting issues relating to Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq.

Humaid introduced his fellow members, quipping that Ambassador Al-Jubeir was really a member of the U.S. delegation.

¶7. (C) Humaid briefly described the Shura Council's history, explaining that it is 85 years old, but had been re-formed under King Fahd in 1992. He explained that the

first session consisted of 60 members, which was expanded in the second session to 90 members. Members in the third session increased to 120, and there are now 150 members on the Council. He said that all of the members are male, and that each is appointed by the King to serve a four-year term.

Humaid explained that he has served in the Majlis since 1992 and is in his second term as Chairman. Council members represent all regions of the Kingdom, he pointed out, as well as many professions, including the military, engineering, business, and law. He described members as experienced experts, well educated, well known, and "socially accepted." He explained that while there are no female members, there are six women who advise the Council and who have the right to attend any session or committee meeting and participate in Council delegations.

18. (C) Humaid continued that the Council functions "like any other parliament," and that its two main functions are to monitor the government's performance and propose rules and regulations. He added that the Council has issued over 90 laws and regulations. He explained that in addition to ad hoc committees, the Council has 12 special committees: Islamic Affairs and Human Rights; Social, Family and Manpower Affairs; Economic and Energy Affairs; Security Affairs; Regulations, Administration and Petitions; Educational and Scientific Research Affairs; Cultural, Information and Youth Affairs; Foreign Affairs; Water, Public Facilities and Services; Health and Environment Affairs; Financial Affairs; and Transportation, Communications, and Information Technology. Humaid cited a project to combat terrorism, a long and comprehensive proposal of economic, political, and social reforms that was requested by the King, and a project to combat corruption as examples of Council proposals that were adopted by the SAG. He noted that some of the suggested reforms sent to the government included the reorganization of ministries and the establishment of boards and commissions. Humaid pointed out that the Shura Council regularly asks ministers to appear before it in order to answer questions and engage in dialogue and discussion, adding that Council sessions and meetings are open to the public, including journalists and citizens.

Arab Peace Initiative

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19. (C) Shura Council representative Al-Hilwa conveyed his optimism regarding the Arab Peace Initiative, asking for USG support and initiative in pushing it forward. He noted that the Arab Quartet (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Jordan) supports it and requested that the international Quartet do the same. Al-Hilwa emphasized the necessity for Israel to accept the initiative, hoping that the U.S. Congress would press the Israelis to do so. Congressman Lantos said he was deeply impressed with the King's proposal for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, emphasizing his importance as a regional leader, as well as vis-a-vis the region's religious hierarchy. Congressman Lantos stressed that governments such as Egypt and Jordan that have relations with Israel would be useful in this process, adding that it is also important to involve United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon because he enjoys global respect and can help move the proposal forward. He warned that settling this dispute will not happen overnight and will require a great deal of give and take, consultation, and negotiation.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

110. (C) Congressman Lantos pointed out that the time is ripe to take action against the WMD threat in the region. He noted that Iranian President Ahmadinejad is determined to develop nuclear weapons despite UN Security Council

resolutions and world opinion. Lantos emphasized that Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would change the entire political and strategic dynamic of the region, and called it unacceptable for such a government to have nuclear weapons. Rep. Lantos continued that he and Rep. Hobson are introducing legislation, supported by Speaker Pelosi, that would make it unnecessary for any country to develop a full nuclear cycle if it only wants nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. He said the legislation has two goals: preventing development of nuclear weapons by countries such as Iran; and making nuclear fuel available to all countries to develop peaceful nuclear energy. Congressman Hobson emphasized that the Lantos-Hobson proposal represents a united vision to reduce the possibility of future conflicts.

¶11. (C) Council member Fadhel said that everyone is very worried about military developments in the region, especially as they relate to nuclear weapons. He said people are especially worried about Israeli nuclear weapons that are ready for use, saying that the populace wants the region, including Iran, clear and free of nuclear weapons. However, he doubted that this would happen unless the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved comprehensively and justly. He emphasized that most countries in the region do not accept that Israel's possession of nuclear weapons is ignored while Iran is sanctioned.

Visas

¶12. (C) As Council member Al-Zamil discussed the problems Saudis face in getting visas for the U.S., Saudi Ambassador Al-Jubeir jumped in to translate for Al-Zamil, despite the presence of Embassy and Shura Council translators. Adding his own interpretation to Al-Zamil's comments, Al-Jubeir said that this issue has had a tremendous impact on bilateral relations, but that both the SAG and the USG are working on it. He said the problem is that many different departments are involved, there are new regulations, complexities, many Saudi names are the same or similar, and bureaucratic obstacles exist in both countries. He noted that USD 11 billion in trade and investment and 550,000 jobs have been impacted by Saudis going to countries other than the U.S.

Petroleum

¶13. (C) Council member Al-Kurdi voiced concern over bill S 879, saying it affects Saudi Arabia's role in the oil market and industry. (NOTE: The Arctic Research and Policy Amendment Act of 2005 or S.879 was introduced by Senator Murkowski on April 21, 2005. It was passed by the U.S. Senate on May 16, 2006, and referred to the U.S. House of Representatives Science Committee on May 17, 2006. END NOTE). Al-Kurdi noted that the KSA is investing heavily in oil and natural gas in order to better supply the

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international market. He voiced concern that the USG and the U.S. Congress want to decrease dependency on Middle Eastern oil.

¶14. (C) Noting that there are a number of initiatives in Congress to address energy needs, Speaker Pelosi emphasized that for environmental, energy, economic, and security reasons, the U.S. must increase its energy independence and reduce its dependence on oil. She pointed out that there is not an endless supply of oil and that the U.S. must prepare for the future, adding that the U.S. must also stop global warming. However, she welcomed further discussion, saying that the issue is important to all countries.

¶15. (U) This cable has been cleared by Speaker Pelosi's staff.
GFOELLER